

Workforce Observations

For The North Central River Valley WDA

October, 2001



District Employment Levels Remain Good for Now

The month of September in the Upper Wisconsin River Valley saw a slight falloff in employment levels in almost all of the industrial sectors. The declines in jobs were not large and in some cases were less than 100. Durable goods manufacturing only dropped off by about 80 jobs, and wholesale trade by about the same. The largest drop on employment was in retail trade, about 420 jobs. This decline in retail is to be expected in the early fall, as the unofficial end of summer comes with the Memorial Day weekend and the return of students to their classes and the end of their summer employment. This does not necessarily mean that there is no longer any need for these workers (as is usually the case when job levels drop in any industry), but that they are no longer available to work. In fact, with the prolonged tourist season in our northern counties (as well as other parts of the state), many employers find that they are almost as busy in the fall months as they are at mid summer, at least those most closely associated with tourism. This situation often continues for another month or so, then picks up again as the Christmas holidays approach. The mid winter increase in business in the northern counties has been a regular occurrence for some time, and gets stronger each year.

Compared to the same period of last year, employment was up slightly, except in manufacturing, where it was off by a little over 1,100 jobs (mainly in durable goods manufacturing). Locally and nationwide, orders are off a bit and have been for some time. It should be said, however, that a loss of just over a thousand positions over the 12 month period in a field of about 45,000 jobs is not great, and probably does not amount to even an indicator.

Civilian labor force estimates for the month of September basically mirror the nonfarm statistics for the

most recent month. The number of people in the labor force declined somewhat in every River county in September when compared to the previous month, and in most areas when compared to the same period of 12 months ago. The number of people working also went down in seven of the nine counties, but not usually by so much, so that the unemployment rates of the nine county district continued to go down in September (except in Vilas, where it edged up by 0.3 of a percentage point). The important thing to remember about the most recent numbers is that the unemployment rate of most of Wisconsin counties remains at historical lows, regardless of worrisome signs on the horizon.

The Labor Market Barometer Provides Strange Readings

The most recent month under discussion here is September, and what must be remembered is that the statistics do not really reflect the events of September

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11th. The reason for this is that the data is gathered by survey at about the middle of the month, in the case of September mere hours after the New York attack. Therefore, we are in a strange situation, both locally and na-

tionally. In one sense, it could be said that the numbers are correct, and reflect the labor market situation about as close as the place of residence and work surveys can. The county employment levels, unemployment rates, labor force totals, and job numbers in individual industries are probably representative of the mid month realities in the Wisconsin River Valley.

So far, so good. But, very shortly before the data was collected, national events occurred that had a serious impact on the entire economic situation, and some of these consequences were fairly immediate, especially in New York. However, the results of the tragedy at our level are generally harder to discern.

One of the reasons for this is that we were already beginning to experience the first tentative slide into an economic slump, locally, regionally, and across the country. The signs have been there for some time – manufacturing orders off in several businesses, the continuing problems with paper, trade employment sputtering into the fall season, and construction employment levels beginning to dip for the first time in years.

In this sense, it may be correct to say that the month of September can be seen as two halves, pre-New York and post-New York. The contrast here in the Valley is nowhere near as sharp as elsewhere, but it is probably safe to say that the 9-11-01 event had the effect of accelerating employment declines in several areas. Manufacturing will probably take the hardest hits, but there is apprehension over what the upcoming Holiday season will bring for

District retailers. Last year was already lackluster and this year is anyone's guess.

What will be revealed by next month's employment numbers will have as much to do with seasonal employment movement as the events of September 11 and a clearer picture is sure to emerge. There is reason to suspect that it will presage rough weather ahead.

For The Month Of September	Adams	Forest	Lang.	Lincoln	Mara.	Oneida	Portage	Vilas	Wood	Region
Labor Force	9,096	4,955	9,711	15,390	77,253	22,533	38,210	12,201	40,965	230,314
Employed	8,821	4,685	9,180	14,697	74,806	21,720	36,733	11,837	39,383	221,862
Unemployed	275	270	531	693	2,447	813	1,477	364	1,582	8,452
Unemployment rate(%)	3.0	5.4	5.5	4.5	3.2	3.6	3.9	3.0	3.9	3.7%
Total, all industries**	4,174	3,236	8,116	12,330	70,830	18,867	32,880	8,688	45,821	204,942
Construction & Mining	192	129	484	625	3,650	1,437	1,324	1,067	2,019	10,927
Manufacturing	392	504	1,726	4,137	19,001	2,202	6,852	545	10,075	45,434
Transportation & Util.	177	214	398	427	4,006	681	1,947	264	3,310	11,424
Wholesale Trade	112	41	461	421	5,166	394	1,621	142	1,431	9,789
Retail Trade	891	506	1,878	2,381	12,223	5,291	5,478	2,309	8,274	39,231
FIRE	100	96	263	254	4,825	472	3,674	315	911	10,910
Services	1,093	501	1,627	1,923	14,237	5,676	7,462	2,055	14,378	48,952
Government	1,217	1,245	1,279	2,162	7,722	2,714	4,522	1,991	5,423	28,275
Change from previous mo.	Adams	Forest	Lang.	Lincoln	Mara.	Oneida	Portage	Vilas	Wood	Region
Civilian Labor Force*	597	308	-76	531	173	369	308	299	-173	2,336
Employed	622	296	38	510	287	541	484	187	-4	2,961
Unemployed	-25	12	-114	21	-114	-172	-176	112	-169	-625
Unemployment rate(%)	-0.5	-0.2	-1.1	0.0	-0.1	-0.8	-0.5	0.9	-0.4	0.0
Total, all industries**	25	211	211	-26	129	-160	308	-499	1,061	1,260
Construction & Mining	-4	-11	-11	-13	53	-43	-68	-32	-23	-152
Manufacturing	-7	22	22	-49	-203	179	-44	6	-124	-198
Transportation & Util.	-6	46	46	22	32	14	23	10	108	295
Wholesale Trade	-1	-16	-16	-2	-30	2	-10	-2	2	-73
Retail Trade	-40	-33	-33	-31	-144	-221	111	-233	197	-427
FIRE	-2	0	0	-2	-24	3	-62	-4	-13	-104
Services	-39	-37	-37	5	-208	-335	12	-506	-56	-1,201
Government	124	240	240	44	653	241	346	262	970	3,120
Change from year ago	Adams	Forest	Lang.	Lincoln	Mara.	Oneida	Portage	Vilas	Wood	Region
Civilian Labor Force*	78	144	195	237	699	207	-269	169	-296	1,164
Employed	51	99	163	118	449	177	-143	96	219	1,229
Unemployed	27	45	32	119	250	30	-126	73	-515	-65
Unemployment rate(%)	0.2	0.7	0.3	0.7	0.3	0.1	-0.3	0.6	-1.2	0.0
Total, all industries**	-24	66	67	-290	606	289	-580	289	476	899
Construction & Mining	11	25	-36	6	262	82	-12	82	50	469
Manufacturing	-38	14	-52	-240	-533	65	-196	45	-170	-1,106
Transportation & Util.	8	-7	3	-35	76	-13	102	25	5	165
Wholesale Trade	9	-1	-30	24	171	-12	-12	-2	-90	57
Retail Trade	-6	19	22	-30	97	323	-578	50	162	58
FIRE	2	3	17	-50	27	-13	87	7	-10	71
Services	0	31	72	12	395	-216	421	71	465	1,251
Government	-10	-18	72	24	111	72	-393	10	65	-67

* Includes participants residing in area. ** Includes employment with employers located in area. Estimates are NOT seasonally adjusted. Current month estimates are preliminary. Totals may not add due to rounding. Calculations based on unrounded numbers.

Look for the most current Labor Market Information at: WWW.DWD.STATE.WI.US/LMI

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